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SUBJECT: THAKSIN AND NRC HEAD ANAND TO DISCUSS ON TV
SOUTHERN VIOLENCE AND NEXT STEPS BY THE RTG

REF: (A) BANGKOK 4697 (B) BANGKOK 4653

1. (U) Summary: On July 28 Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) head and former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun will discuss on national television the ongoing violence in Thailand's south, the RTG's Emergency Decree and the NRC's proposals to end the troubles. On July 26, the Cabinet accepted a list of 14 short-term measures submitted by the NRC to address the southern violence. Thaksin has indicated that some of the suggestions will be more difficult to implement than others. The degree to which Thaksin and Anand can meld their views will have a significant bearing on how the RTG proceeds in addressing the very complicated situation in the deep south. End Summary.

JOINT TELEVISION DISCUSSION FOCUSES NATION ON SOUTH

2. (U) On July 28 Prime Minister Thaksin and National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) head and former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun will discuss on national television the violence in Thailand's south, the RTG's Emergency Decree and the NRC's proposals to end the troubles. The broadcast will feature two strong political personalities who not infrequently have been at odds over the best approach to the southern problem. As such, it is being widely anticipated. Most interlocutors with whom we have spoken see the public discussion of the ongoing turmoil in the southern provinces as a welcome new factor to address the southern situation. Opposition Democrat Party Leader Abhisit Vejjajiva, for example, quickly voiced his support for Thaksin and Anand's joint appearance before the public.

NRC PROPOSALS GIVEN TO GOVERNMENT

3. (U) On July 26, the Cabinet accepted a list of 14 short-term measures designed to address the southern violence submitted by the NRC. These points include:

-- Reapply King Rama VI's policy for the Pattani region, dated July 6, 1923, which "respects cultural differences."

-- Set up a national committee for judiciary procedure in order to examine the investigations that have taken place since the current spate of violence in the three southernmost border provinces (Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala) began in January 4, 2004; monitor the development of the prosecutions.

-- Allow persons arrested or detained under Section 11 (1) of the Public Administration on Emergency Situation Decree access to their lawyers within 48 hours.

-- Employ forensic science procedures in criminal investigations in the affected areas in order to increase the efficiency of the state's prosecution process with transparency and justice.

-- Appoint local community, Islamic and Buddhist leaders to a government committee on reducing the violence.

-- All firearms should be regarded as illegal in the three southernmost border provinces, except for possession by security forces.

-- Install Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in public places throughout the three affected southern provinces in order to obtain evidence of crimes by the instigators.

-- Move entertainment establishments away from community areas, religious institutions, schools and youth recreation centers.

-- Allow local communities to give first-hand accounts of violent incidents.

-- Set up village defense volunteer units as grassroots operation units. These units should consist of Interior Ministry officials, soldiers, police, and territory defense volunteers.

-- Set up community peace committees, consisting of community leaders, such as Imams, Islamic religious teachers, village chiefs, and chairpersons of Tambon (local administrative

unit) Administration Organizations (TAO), as well as army and police officials.

-- Support students demonstrating for peace.

-- Install security alarms and provide protection for all schools.

-- Allow teachers in the affected areas to assist in setting up these school safety systems.

EMERGENCY DECREE TO MESH WITH NRC'S PROPOSALS?

14. (SBU) Though his Cabinet has accepted the NRC proposals, Thaksin warned that some of the suggestions will be difficult to implement right away. He specifically noted that "disarming the public" in the affected areas was a problem and appeared to indicate that he would not impose this measure immediately. Thaksin told reporters on July 27 that reconciliation alone cannot halt the unrest and that tough laws (read the Emergency Decree) must remain as a "necessary evil."

HOPE FOR CLEAR DIRECTION

15. (SBU) In Thaksin and Anand, the Thai public will be able to see two powerful poles of thought discuss their approaches to deal with the ongoing crisis in Thailand's deep southern provinces. Thaksin has made clear his belief that bringing security to the affected areas is his foremost priority, whereas Anand has consistently maintained that an overemphasis on security without addressing other factors risks exacerbating the situation. Both are strong political personalities who are not likely to hold back in putting their views across. The degree to which Thaksin and Anand can meld their views will have a definite impact on the future direction of RTG policy in dealing with its troubled southern provinces.

BOYCE